

because I think it is important. The gentleman talked about the fact that if the Democrats or if, on a bipartisan basis, we had been allowed to develop a bill that kept traditional Medicare and just added a prescription drug benefit, which is what most of my seniors, and I think most seniors expected. I mean, if you talk to the seniors about what they expected with a prescription drug benefit, they figured we were just going to have the traditional Medicare, and we were going to add the benefit.

I think it is important before we close that we point out that, as Democrats, we developed and offered an alternative as a substitute on the floor of the House, exactly that. Basically, what the Democratic Party in the House and what our leadership proposed and what both the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) and I supported, was simply adding a prescription drug benefit to traditional Medicare. And we used the Part B, which now pays for seniors' doctors bills, as an example.

Under the current Part B, you pay a premium of about \$55 a month. You have a \$100 deductible. Eighty percent of the costs of your doctor bills are paid for by the Federal Government. Twenty percent by you; that is your copay up to a certain amount catastrophic limit where 100 percent of the cost is paid for by the Federal Government.

That is exactly what the Democrats offered as an alternative. We said that for a \$25 premium you would have a \$100 deductible for your first \$100 in drug costs. Eighty percent of your drug bills would be paid for by the Federal Government. Twenty percent copay. And at a certain level, I forget what it was, \$3,000 maybe \$3,500 catastrophic level, 100 percent of the cost would be paid for by the Federal government. And we had a provision in the bill that specifically said that the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Medicare Administrator, would negotiate price reductions.

I know some of the Republicans said that that would have been a very expensive bill. The bottom line is whatever costs to the Federal Government probably would have been outweighed by negotiated prices, that would have brought the cost down considerably. So there was clearly an alternative out there that would have simply done what most seniors expected and simply added a prescription drug benefit to traditional Medicare.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. That is a very interesting point. I think seniors in my district and seniors all over the country, because I was hearing this from colleague after colleague, people were wondering why it was so complicated? Why was it so difficult? Why can Congress just not pass a drug benefit?

People understand how Medicare works. You go to a physician. The bill is sent to Medicare to be paid. You go to a hospital. The bill is sent to Medicare to be paid. There is a copay and a deductible. People understand that.

They understand the premium. It is very simple insurance. It is full choice of doctor, full choice of hospital, and why not do the same with a prescription? Then you get the prescription. It is paid for by Medicare. You have full choice of your prescription.

Instead, the Republicans had to make it a lot more complicated. Why? Because they wanted to get their privatization agenda enacted. That means using the insurance companies. It means playing ball with the drug industry. It means a lot of that money, that \$400 billion that should go directly to cover prescription drugs, and very little overhead, the 2 percent overhead that Medicare has been able to keep their overhead at 2 percent. Instead of that, the Republicans are seeing all kinds of money wasted through the insurance and the drug companies.

Frankly, it just kind of amazes me because seniors do think it could be simple. The other part of that \$400, as the gentleman pointed out, that \$400 billion would go a lot further under the Democratic plan because we would do cost controls. We would do various kinds of constraints on costs.

The Canadians, as we have heard many times in this Chamber, the price of drugs in Canada is one-half, one-third, one-fourth of what it is in the United States. Tamoxifen, a breast cancer drug, is one-eighth the cost in France than it is in the United States.

If we could have restrained costs, controlled costs, brought prices down, whatever you want to call it, if we had done that and put this bill into Medicare, put this whole plan into Medicare, a lot less complicated, we could have done it months ago, years ago, we could have done it; and seniors would have a better plan. They would understand what it is about. They would not have all of these questions, but the drug industry and the insurance industry probably would not be so happy, and I guess that is in the end why this body did what it did.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, the last thing I wanted to mention, because I know we only have a few minutes, was the reimportation. I know that many of us saw the reimportation from Canada or other countries as sort of a last-minute effort to try to have some kind of cost controls put into effect. We would rather have cost containment here rather than have to import drugs from Canada or other countries. But the bottom line is that both Houses, both the House and the Senate had passed a provision that would have provided for an essentially legalized drug reimportation, at least from Canada, if not from some of the other countries in Western Europe that were comparable to the United States.

Even though the conference between the House and the Senate had those provisions in both Houses, they ended up essentially eliminating it in the bill. Also, today in the omnibus bill, the appropriations bill that we came back to vote on today, I am sure the

gentleman noticed that that was stripped out of that as well.

So every effort has been made by the Republican leadership and by the Republican President to do everything possible to make sure that there are no cost controls whatsoever. And I still see, and I go back to what I said in the beginning, Mr. Speaker, I still see my colleagues on the Republican side coming down here and saying there is some kind of cost control or savings that the seniors are going to get from this bill.

That is simply untrue. Everything has been taken out. The reimportation language from Canada, specific language that says that you cannot negotiate price. Every effort was made to guarantee that there would be no fiddling whatsoever with the drug companies's ability to simply raise prices as they see fit. That is what we are left to.

It is really sad to think that we have come to that. I know the President signed the bill today, and it is over with in that respect; but, hopefully, and I already see it happening, you will get a groundswell from America's seniors throughout the country over the next few months or the next few years that are going to demand that this bill be repealed or significantly altered. I am convinced that is going to happen.

It is sad to think that there was this huge missed opportunity when we could have actually passed a good prescription drug benefit and done something to help America's seniors, rather than this cruel hoax that has been foisted upon them today.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) for all he has done on this issue over the last few years.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and the balance of the week on account of upcoming surgery.

Mr. NADLER (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Mr. JANKLOW (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of appearing in court.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today on account of official business.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. BROWN of Ohio) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. BROWN of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. MCGOVERN, for 5 minutes, today.
Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. WATSON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CASE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. WAXMAN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HOLT, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. McCOTTER) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. HAYES, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PAUL, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. HARRIS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. McCOTTER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. SOUDER, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Member (at his own request) to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. HASTERT, for 5 minutes, today.

EXTENSION OF REMARKS

By unanimous consent, permission to revise and extend remarks was granted to:

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey and to include extraneous material, notwithstanding the fact that it exceeds two pages of the RECORD and is estimated by the Public Printer to cost \$3,100.

SENATE BILLS REFERRED

Bills of the Senate of the following titles were taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 33. An act to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to sell or exchange all or part of certain administrative sites and other land in the Ozark-St. Francis and Ouachita National Forests and to use funds derived from the sale or exchange to acquire, construct, or improve administrative sites; to the Committee on Resources in addition to the Committee on Agriculture for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

S. 99. An act for the relief of Jaya Gulab Tolani and Hitesh Gulab Tolani, to the Committee on the Judiciary.

S. 103. An act for the relief of Lindita Idrizi Heath; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

S. 460. An act to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to authorize appropriations for fiscal years 2004 through 2010 to carry out the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

S. 541. An act for the relief of Ilko Vasilev Ivanov, Anelia Marinova Peneva, Marina Ilkova Ivanova, and Julia Ilkova Ivanova; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

S. 648. An act to amend the Public Health Service Act with respect to health professions programs regarding the practice of pharmacy; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

S. 848. An act for the relief of Daniel King Cairo; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

S. 1130. An act for the relief of Esidronio Arreola-Saucedo, Maria Elena Cobian Arreola, Nayely Bibiana Arreola, and Cindy Jael Arreola; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

S. 1402. An act to authorize appropriations for activities under the Federal railroad safety laws for fiscal years 2004 through 2008, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

S. 1537. An act to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to convey to the New Hope Cemetery Association certain land in the State of Arkansas for use as a cemetery; to the Committee on Resources.

S. 1683. An act to provide for a report on the parity of pay and benefits among Federal law enforcement officers and to establish an exchange program between Federal law enforcement employees and State and local law enforcement employees, to the Committee on Government Reform.

S. 1881. An act to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to make technical corrections relating to the amendments made by the Medical Device User Fee and Modernization Act of 2002, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

S. 1920. An act to extend for 6 months the period for which chapter 12 of title 11 of the United States Code is reenacted; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

Mr. Trandahl, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled bills and joint resolution of the House of the following titles, which were thereupon signed by the Speaker pro tempore MAC THORNBERRY:

On December 1:

H.R. 1437. An act to improve the United States Code.

H.R. 1813. An act to amend the Torture Victims Relief Act of 1998 to authorize appropriations to provide assistance for domestic and foreign centers and programs for the treatment of victims of torture, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2622. An act to amend the Fair Credit Reporting Act, to prevent identify theft, improve resolution of consumer disputes, improve the accuracy of consumer records, make improvements in the use of, and consumer access to, credit information, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3287. An act to award congressional gold medals posthumously on behalf of Reverend Joseph A. DeLaine, Harry and Eliza Briggs, and Levi Pearson in recognition of their contributions to the Nations as pioneers in the effort to desegregate public schools that led directly to the landmark desegregation case of Brown et al. v. the Board of Education of Topeka et al.

H.R. 3348. An act to reauthorize the ban on undetectable firearms.

H.J. Res. 80. Joint Resolution appointing the day for the convening of the second session of the One Hundred Eight Congress.

On December 3:

H.R. 2297. An act to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

H.J. Res. 63. Joint resolution to approve the Compact of Free Association, as amended, between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Compact of Free Association, as amended, between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and to appropriate funds to carry out the amended Compacts.

On December 6, signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 1. An act to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for a voluntary program for prescription drug coverage under the Medicare Program, to modernize the Medicare Program, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a deduction to individuals for amounts contrib-

uted to health savings security accounts and health savings accounts, to provide for the disposition of unused health benefits in cafeteria plans and flexible spending arrangements, and for other purposes.

SENATE ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The SPEAKER announced his signature to an enrolled bill of the Senate of the following title:

S. 459. An act to ensure that a public safety officer who suffers a fatal heart attack or stroke while on duty shall be presumed to have died in the line of duty for purposes of public safety officer survivor benefits.

BILLS PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Jeff Trandahl, Clerk of the House reports that on November 26, 2003 he presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bills.

H.R. 421. To reauthorize the United States Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1367. To authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a loan repayment program regarding the provision of veterinary services in shortage situations, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1683. To increase, effective as of December 1, 2003, the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1821. To award a congressional gold medal to Dr. Dorothy Height in recognition of her many contributions to the Nation.

H.R. 3038. To make certain technical and conforming amendments to correct the Health Care Safety Net Amendments of 2002.

H.R. 3140. To provide for availability of contact lens prescriptions to patients, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3166. To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 57 Old Tappan Road in Tappan, New York, as the "John G. Dow Post Office Building".

H.R. 3185. To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 38 Spring Street in Nashua, New Hampshire, as the "Hugh Gregg Post Office Building".

H.R. 3349. To authorize salary adjustments for Justices and judges of the United States for fiscal year 2004.

Jeff Trandahl, Clerk of the House reports that on December 2, 2003 he presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bills.

H.R. 1828. To halt Syrian support for terrorism, end its occupation of Lebanon, stop its development of weapons of mass destruction, cease its illegal importation of Iraqi oil and illegal shipments of weapons and other military items to Iraq, and by so doing hold Syria accountable for the serious international security problems it has caused in the Middle East, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1904. An act to improve the capacity of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to conduct hazardous fuels reduction projects on National Forest System lands and Bureau of Land Management lands aimed at protecting communities, watersheds, and certain other at-risk lands from catastrophic wildfire, to enhance efforts to protect watersheds and address threats to forest and rangeland health, including catastrophic wildfire, across the landscape, and for other purposes.